

# PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

IN Paris, the final elegances are now being imparted to the most exciting film, perhaps, of 1955. It is the colour film of Cousteau's "The Silent World," to be released at the Biarritz and Madeleine cinemas early in February and distributed elsewhere by Rank's.

And, the unpromisingly titled "Come to the Sea," which, seen the film in the rough and without sound, describes it as "the best homage that man could offer the cinema on its sixtieth anniversary."

James Dugan, Cousteau's closest collaborator, whose own history of undersea exploration, "Man under the Sea," will be coming from Hamish Hamilton in the spring, gives me the following details.

## Four Sequences

The film, which is not a reshoot of Cousteau's book, is the result of two cruises to the Indian Ocean and seventeen miles of colour film. The musical score is by Yves Baudrier, and the four main sequences are image-music compositions without words—a fantastic orgy of porpoises in the Gulf of Aden, the famous underwater pioneers, Dumas, exploring the bombed sea. Thistlethorn a hundred feet down in the Jubal Strait; two divers exploring an Indian Ocean reef behind electric torpedoes, and a fantasy of tropical fish close-ups secured in six weeks on the fringing reef at Assumption Island in the Aldabaras.

## Vanity, Vanity . . .

In the course of taking this last sequence, the divers (named a hundred-pound grouper which ate out of their hands (instead of chewing off their arms, which it could do).

This huge fish waited at the diving ladder when they started down in the morning and swam up with them in the evening to watch them decompress on the line.

Finally the grouper spoiled so many shots of other fish by "mugging the lens" that the anti-shark cage had to be dropped over him until the shooting was finished.

## Remember Me?

IT will long be debated whether Earl Attlee's quality of self-effacement stems from a genuine humility or from that Jesuitical streak inherent in many great leaders of men.

The "humble" Mr. Attlee is well illustrated by a story told by our Ambassador in Washington, Sir Roger Makins.

One day in the Foreign Office the massive, gauging figure of the then Mr. Makins hurried out of his room at the very moment the Prime Minister was passing the door. Mr. Attlee was flattened to the ground. Scrambling to his feet and brushing himself down, he waved aside Mr. Makins's horrified apologies. "Ah, Makins," he said in unruffled tones, "I was at school with your father. Please remember me to him the next time you meet. Name of Attlee."

## Parnassus Today: No. 4

PERHAPS no first novel of recent years was more enthusiastically acclaimed than Miss Iris

Murdoch's "Under the Net." No sooner had my colleague J. W. Lambert sounded the halloo than reviewers hurried from every quarter to praise it for its high-spirited poetry and individual sense of fun.

That was in 1953. The book sold itself merrily out in its original



MISS IRIS MURDOCH

edition and in a popular book club edition. But since then the romance has been silent and the delectable-Murdoch, known to her students at one of the most stimulating of Oxford philosophy dons, has appeared to take over.

Miss Murdoch has, indeed, promoted the interests of Oxford philosophy with an unforced gravity and talent for high-minded worrying that George Eliot herself could hardly have bettered.

## Work in Progress

Free as the Ayer, if not freer, in her approach to the traditional problems of her trade, Miss Murdoch puts her views in a voice whose gruff tones bespeak a warm, direct and un-garrulous nature.

Her keen interest in Je-jutzu makes Miss Murdoch a person to be argued about, rather than with; but as good novelists are even rarer than good philosophers, I am happy to report that a new novel, set mainly in London but garnished with an episode on the Italian Riviera, is likely to reach the bookshelves next year. Its provisional title: "The Flight from the Enchanter."

## Harriman's Turkey

LAST week the path to political power in the United States was littered with dead bodies.

In Alabama, Governor Harriman, whose main claim to athletic fame rests on an eight-goal polo handicap, went out before breakfast and shot a 22-lb. wild turkey. Before giving a speech that afternoon Mr. Harriman went "deer hunting," but the deer escaped.

politician, he brought down a fine stag. Senator Kefauver's campaign publicists sprang into action and the beast was soon hailed as the finest deer shot in Texas for years.

## Stevenson's Shark

Meanwhile Adlai Stevenson, in Florida, landed a six-foot sailfish off Miami Beach. Again the publicists leapt to battlestations to remind reporters that Governor Stevenson had once harpooned a shark.

It seems that all this carnage is arranged to impress local politicians and the public with the idea that each of these prospective Presidential candidates is "just one of the gang."

With more shots, but less bloodshed, President Eisenhower pressed home the same message on the golf course.

## Distinguished Traveller

MR. SOMERSET MAUGHAM generally contrives to end his autumn visit to London on Christmas Eve. He enjoys travelling across France to Cap Ferrat on Christmas Day. The stranger and train are empty, and customs and railway officials are filled with a convivial spirit.

But this year he left early—last Thursday—and he is now on his way to Egypt to stay in the Aka Khan's villa which has been lent him for several weeks.

Mr. Maugham leaves London without revealing the secret of the book upon which he has been engaged for the last year. But I believe it to be a collection of portraits of some of the remarkable people Mr. Maugham has come across during his lifetime.

## The Aquatic Sub.

OF all the ships and weapons Admiral Mountbatten and his staff saw during their recent tour to America, none seems to have made a greater impression than a non-atomic submarine—the U.S.S. Albacore.

This craft has a curious dolphin-shaped hull and great but undivided speed under water. The British observers who travelled in her were startled by her manoeuvrability.

This 1,200-ton submarine can manoeuvre under water like her namesake, the great fishing fish. In fact her forty-man crew talk of "fishing" the ship and they fasten their safety-belts before starting their "aquatic" drill.

The Albacore is driven by non-atomic engines and there is therefore no insuperable barrier to any Anglo-American agreement for sharing information about this remarkable craft.

## Phutbol

IF Mr. Bulganin is correct in describing Khrushchev as a once famous footballer who played for Moscow in 1913 it is probable that Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart played against him.

Sir Robert played inside left for Russia's best team—the Morskizis. In 1912-13 his team won the League Championship before

crowds of 10,000 and he tells me that he still has his gold medal to show for it.

The team was founded by Harry Charnock, an English textile executive now living in Cambridge, whose family first introduced football to Russia.

## A Charm Recaptured

"WHAT'S become of Wells?" a modern Browning might say: for H. G. Wells, once one of the most influential of living writers, is now rarely discussed. His books remain, of course, but of the personal magic which he exerted there is, as yet, no satisfactory memorial.

Not in this country, that is to

say: but in America it is generally agreed that "Max Tower," the principal character in Mr. Anthony West's new novel, "Heritage," is Wells to the life.

Having perused a copy of the American edition of this excellent novel, I can confirm that Mr. West's portrait makes it possible for younger readers to understand the extreme fascination of a Wellsian personality. Hilarious and tender, volubulous and true, it is worthy alike of its subject and its author.

Mr. West, as "New Yorker" readers know, is one of the shrewdest of our literary exports. His new book is likely to remain

one of the "Curiosities of Literature."

## Joining Hands

I HEAR that two famous publishing houses are to enter into association with each other. They are William Heinemann Ltd. and Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd.

This is certainly not a case of the swallowing-up of a young firm by an impenetrably situated older rival. Mr. Rupert Hart-Davis firm retains its own separate identity and policy, and its head will continue to exercise autonomy

—not to mention his massive charm. By coming under the wing of Heinemann he gains relief from purely business problems. This is

not the first experiment in rationalisation which has originated from the highly sympathetic personality of Mr. A. S. Frere, of Heinemann.

A few years ago he entered into a like agreement with Secker and Warburg, and the book trade is well aware of the success of the move. That firm's reputation and (I would hazard) prosperity are advancing in remarkable fashion.

## Happy Landings!

MY reference to Trans-World Airlines' merry instructions for "ditching" has brought me a copy of the rather more sombre precepts issued to a correspondent when crossing the Mediterranean by Iberian Airlines.

The booklet is prefaced by the following exhortation: Precision and an elementary knowledge of the ambient, protect the man in his activities; ignorance on the contrary, attracts, makes or increases danger inherent to all existing.

## Weep for the Fat

After instructions to contract the muscles and breathe deeply, "keep motionless and quiet" and "loose the belts and shoes," passengers are advised:

"When head and body have gone complete through the door of the window and according to figure A7 passengers will pull from the inflation string of the waist coat throwing themselves into the water without fear being sure they are safe."

Passengers should not worry if the transfer is difficult directly into the diving because the string with reel will be thrown to take them on board as in figure 6, bearing in mind that this is an easy operation.

Fat persons should leave the plane by the main exit but always letting the others to come out first.

## Parish Militant

FOLLOWING my note on the religious activity at Chichester, I learn that the former Olympic sprinter, the Rev. Nicholas Stacey, is now the editor of a parish paper with the largest circulation—3,500 copies—in the Church of England.

\* Norhend Review "is produced

by St. Mark's, Portsmouth, and it follows its editor in setting a fast pace. Under the headline "Mr. Stacey Must Think Again," the whole of the latest front page is devoted to an attack on the compulsory purchase prices being paid to owners of houses marked for slum clearance.

Seven thousand houses will be pulled down in Portsmouth, and there is splendid militancy in Mr. Stacey's. The present law amounts to legalised robbery and should be condemned by all Christians.

These words have borne fruit. Last week Mr. Stacey changed the law.

## Bannister Portraits

THE athletic, medical and literary talents of Dr. Roger Bannister are happily supplemented by the artistic skill of his wife Moyna. My reproduction shows part of her sketch for the family Christmas card.

Her father, the Swedish economist Per Jacobsson, sent her to



the Ruskin School at Oxford. Portraits and pottery are her chief preoccupations, but I believe that she has yet to attempt a portrait of her husband.

Dr. Bannister tells me that his military service has been deferred and he will soon be leaving the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford to take up a resident post at Hammer-smith Hospital.

## Unsleeping Eyes

A FRIEND, motoring through France at the time of the visit of the Russian mission, called in at a stationer's to get a map for the next stage of his journey.

"Sorry, Sir. Not a map in the place. Nor an atlas, either. Not so much as a picture-postcard left. The Russian gentlemen bought them all up. Sir. Very pleasant and correct, they were, Sir, and interested in everything."